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NATURE CONSERVATION NEWS

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VOLO AND WAUCONDA BOGS

Purchase agreements were signed on July 9 covering the acquisition by the Nature Conservancy of two tracts in Lake County, Illinois, about 40 miles northwest of Chicago. These areas, long known to Chicago naturalists and used for field trips by nearby universities, are among the very few remaining tamarack bogs in Illinois.

Volo bog is considered to be the best in the state. It has a dense growth of tamarack and in the center there is a small pond about 200 feet across. This is all that remains of the lake that once occupied the bog basin. The tamaracks grow almost to the edge of the water, the open space usually surrounding a bog lake having disappeared. Beneath the trees is a good growth of sphagnum with some leatherleaf, pitcher plants, and other bog species. Poison sumac is present and aspen has appeared in some places. Surrounding the tamaracks is a zone of black alder or winterberry (actually a species of holly).

Wauconda bog is older, from the standpoint of plant succession. It also has tamarack but the stand is more scattered and there is no pond. Zones of vegetation are not so distinct. Many interesting species are present, including some not found in Volo bog.

The two bogs are about seven miles apart and are both within a mile of U. S. highway 12.

Fund goal for the combined projects is $40,000, of which $3,000 has already been raised. Active leaders of the Conservancy's Volo and Wauconda Bogs Committee are Dr. Julian A. Steyermark, Chicago Natural History Museum, Chairman; Mr. Cyrus Mark, Clayton Mark & Company, Treasurer; and Dr. Margery C. Carlson, Northwestern University, Secretary.

Further information on this first Illinois project of the Conservancy may be obtained from the Volo and Wauconda Bogs Committee, c/o Mr. Cyrus Mark, 1900 Dempster Street, Evanston, Ill. Contributions may be sent to the Committee or to the central office of the Conservancy.

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The initial tract of Beckley bog in Connecticut has now been acquired by the Conservancy. In addition, an option has been obtained on an adjoining tract of upland.

A Western New York Chapter of the Nature Conservancy was formed at a meeting held on July 17. Mr. Axel Heilborn of 1020 Creekside Drive, Niagara Falls, N. Y., was elected chairman. This group is already engaged in active negotiations concerning its first natural area project. More on these important developments later.

ROTTING LOGS

"In our forest preserve picnic areas, for public safety, we remove dead trees but elsewhere we let them stand until they fall and then rot where they lie. A lot of people think that is both untidy and wasteful but there is an important reason for it. In order to restore or maintain a healthy natural woodland and all of the wheels within wheels of the living machinery that makes it tick, those slowly decaying trunks, branches and twigs are vitally necessary. It would be a strange forest without them.

"A forest is more than trees. The trees are the framework but around them is woven an unbelievably complex fabric of life: squirrels, mice, birds, bees, beetles, worms, wildflowers, weeds, mushrooms and many, many more. Over a period of years a slowly enlarging hole in a standing dead snag, for instance, may be occupied in turn by a fungus, a boring beetle, a colony of carpenter ants, a woodpecker, a deer mouse, a squirrel, a screech owl, and a raccoon. The dead roots, the loosening bark and the softening trunk also shelter or feed a host of other wood colonists. The roots gradually weaken until one day, in a gust of wind, the snag crashes to the ground where the final act of the drama takes place."

--from Nature Bulletin No. 441 of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Illinois

STATE PARKS

A total of 61,544 acres were acquired for state park purposes in the United States last year, according to statistics just released by the National Park Service. At the same time, 3,967 acres were disposed of, making a net gain of 58,577 acres.

During the past six years, the average total acquisition per year has been 55,014 acres. Average disposal has been 5,556 acres. Gifts have accounted for an average of 16,241 acres or about 30% of the total acquired.

STATE PARKS (cont.):

There are 2,100 areas totalling 5,165,125 acres in the combined state park systems. Two of the parks, Adirondack and Catskill in New York, account for nearly half the total acreage and the nine largest parks account for 3,360,451 acres. The other 2,091 areas thus have a total of 1,804,674 acres.

State park attendance increased by 9% over the previous year, following the usual trend.

REGIONAL NOTES

THREAT TO PINNACLES NATIONAL MONUMENT

Local business interests in cities near Pinnacles National Monument, California, have been urging that a highway be built across the Monument. This would connect U.S. 101 with the secondary route to the east which now provides the only access to the Monument. Located in the Coast Range about 125 miles south of San Francisco, the 12,000 acre area is already so easily accessible to weekend crowds that further road development would be almost disastrous. This was amply demonstrated when the popular magazine SUNSET ran a travel article on Pinnacles National Monument in its April, 1957 issue, advertising that it was "at its best now . . . and it's an easy morning's drive from anywhere in the San Francisco Bay Area." It resulted in a deluge of visitors over one weekend that left campgrounds and surrounding areas severely trampled.

The National Park Service, in objecting to the proposed road, has stated:

"The primary value which gives the Monument national status is its unique geological story. This story is contained in a relatively small area, climaxed by the scenic Pinnacles section. In the same locality are nesting birds of an unusual nature, such as the duck hawk and golden eagle, who will not remain in close proximity to man. To discharge our obligations to the area, we must preserve and protect the geologic and other features of the Monument against unwarranted disturbance, defacement or destruction.

"Experience has shown in several of our areas that a heavy traffic and visitor use impact follows in the wake of road construction. Points of human congestion develop, nearby slopes become spiderwebbed with eroding paths, and the primitive values are threatened. Human erosion, once started, is difficult to control or prevent. The Monument is small, and we believe such an impact in its most desirable sector would be most unfortunate and undesirable.

"A cross-Monument road, one that would bisect this comparatively small area, would result in the native values, for which the area is being preserved, becoming incidental to a highway. With heavy travel steadily increasing on such a road, the Monument would in a short time become a spot along a highway rather than an objective. The Monument with its unique flora and fauna is too small to withstand the impact of a through highway."

GRAZING IN CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

The 1957 session of the California state legislature, now adjourned, was the scene of new attempts to open up the state park system to grazing and other commercial uses. A bill was introduced to permit leasing of park lands for purposes that "will not materially interfere with the recreational use of the land," but it received strenuous opposition and died in committee. Efforts to invade the park lands for economic exploitation are generally based on the claim that "recreation," narrowly interpreted, is the sole purpose of the parks. According to this philosophy, little-used areas are going to waste and should be put to economic use. However, the Public Resources Code recognizes preservation of significant samples of the native landscape as a basic obligation of the state park system.

In June shortly before the legislative session ended, a resolution was rapidly passed through both houses directing the State Park Commission to grant or extend certain grazing permits in the 427,000 acre Anza-Borrego Desert State Park near the Mexican border, and in nearby Cuyamaca Rancho State Park. These included permits that had been revoked or restricted by the Park Commission after extensive hearings in the past. As in the case of the national parks, some grazing by previous operators has been allowed to continue after acquisition of the park lands.

Pollution of water holes by cattle, competition for water with wildlife and human visitors, damage to palms and century plants, and indiscriminate levelling of wildflowers and native grasses resulted before the Park Commission took restrictive action. The resolution that would bring back these conditions was based on special studies by a grazing expert, not park or planning experts. Fortunately the resolution is only a request believed to have no legal binding force, and will probably be rejected by the Park Commission.

The problem of protecting arid grasslands already set aside as parks suggests the difficulty of finding and obtaining any new such areas, though grassland preserves are badly needed. Grazing has penetrated almost every available acre of both private and public land in the southwest. Because of extreme climatic conditions, the desert vegetation responds rapidly to abuse and recovers slowly. Grazing is seldom adjusted to the capacity of the range to carry it, and degenerated conditions are everywhere.

CALIFORNIA WILD PALM GROVES

Wild palm oases of the southern California desert are badly in need of protection, according to the Desert Protective Council at Banning, California. Scattered along the foothills in low canyons at the east base of the San Jacinto Mountains and the north end of the Salton Sink, the groves have long been proposed for inclusion in the State park system. Human impact on the oases ranges from popular picnicking to vandalism, including mutilation of trees and even burning. On May 7, 1957, the Indio, California, NEWS ran striking before and after photographs of the lush Willis Palms in the Indio Phantom Hills, which had been destroyed by fire. In a spirited editorial, the paper called for State protection. In addition to direct human abuse, some of the groves appear to be dying out, possibly because of dwindling water supply. Near Thousand Palms, rising real estate values following division of the land into small homesteads have made acquisition of some areas almost impossible. The Desert Protective Council is planning a study of those groves which are still thriving, with a view to working out concrete proposals for preserving them.

THE NORTH CASCADES

One of the largest undisturbed natural areas in the United States is the northern Cascade Range of Washington. It has escaped--until recent years--economic exploitation and publicity largely because it lay at the

end, rather than in the path of civilization's march across the continent. At present much of it is relatively unknown and lightly visited, in spite of spectacular scenery that surpasses many of our national parks. Most of it is under the jurisdiction of the U. S. Forest Service, which plans for its eventual development under multiple-use management. This means that new roads for timber-cutting and automobile recreation will penetrate much of the area, that mining, grazing and water development will be intensified, and at least one major highway will cross it completely. Only those portions purposely set aside will remain as true samples of the present extensive wilderness.

801,000 acres adjacent to the Canadian border have been set aside as the North Cascade Primitive Area. Farther south, two additional areas, Glacier Peak (347,525 acres) and Alpine Lakes (256,000 acres), have been given temporary protection as "limited areas" pending further study and development of long-range management plans. On February 7, 1957, the Forest Service's Region 6 office released a "Glacier Peak Land Management Study," containing a proposal for a Glacier Peak Wilderness Area, with boundaries different in various respects from those of the present Limited Area. Hearings on the proposed boundaries are to be scheduled.

Stimulated by this action, as well as by growing popular interest in the Glacier Peak area and threats of undesirable developments in some first-rate wilderness sectors, a group of conservationists met in Portland, Oregon, on March 23 to form the North Cascades Conservation Council. The organization is concerned with all aspects of resource-development as they might affect natural values, scenic and scientific, in the North Cascade region. President of the Council is Philip Zalesky of Everett, Washington. Membership at $1.00 is open to anyone. Inquiries may be sent to Mrs. John Dyer, corresponding secretary, 116 J Street, Northeast, Auburn, Washington.

In addition to the areas already classified as wilderness or being given study, there are many miles of even less-known wilderness along the Cascade crest which are unclassified and unprotected. The existence of these large tracts of first-class virgin land should be regarded as an opportunity of national significance.

FROM SAND DUNES TO PARK

That a park is not necessarily a nature preserve is graphically illustrated by work currently in progress in Florida. According to PARKS AND RECREATION magazine for July, Bay County is "constructing" a recreational park with a half mile frontage on the Gulf of Mexico two miles west of Panama City. To accomplish this work, the first step is the moving and leveling of the huge sand dunes at the location. Bulldozers are doing the work and it is estimated that about 40,000 yards of sand will have to be moved to complete the park.

NEW BOOKS

PLAN FOR PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF RECREATION RESOURCES, CURRENT AND ELEVEN POINT RIVERS COUNTRY, MISSOURI. Published by the Missouri Division of Resources and Development. 1956. 49 pp. and 3 separate maps.

This is a comprehensive study and plan for preservation of a section of the Ozark country in southeastern Missouri. The report sets forth a program for "use of land, conservation of natural resources, preservation of scenic, scientific, and historic features, and development and use of recreation facilities" within the watersheds of the Current and Eleven Point rivers. These would be preserved as free-flowing streams. The survey was made as a cooperative project by Missouri agencies and the National Park Service.

It is proposed the region be designated a national recreation area. For the most part, the pattern of land use would stay the same. Much of the land along the rivers would be acquired for public ownership, as would ecological and historic sites and other points of interest. Scenic easements would be obtained along the highways. This is an important scenic region readily available to a large population. The report displays an admirable boldness of vision commensurate with the needs though it may be deficient in providing for control of the use of lands that would remain in private ownership.

THE ECOLOGY OF THE WATCHUNG RESERVATION, UNION COUNTY, NEW JERSEY, by James Baird. Published by the Department of Botany, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N. J. 1956. 83 pp. $1.50.

The Watchung Reservation is a 2,000 acre tract in northern New Jersey under the Union County Park Commission. It was set aside some years ago to preserve a "country landscape" amidst rapidly developing urban residential areas. The tract is considered not as a natural area but as an area to be managed to maintain its scenic attractiveness and high wildlife populations. It includes a variety of vegetative types representing various stages of regeneration from past uses. This report describes the existing conditions of the biotic communities, interprets natural vegetative changes, and outlines recommendations for future management. It is of particular interest because it assembles a comprehensive view of natural conditions and applies ecological principles to the management of an area that has in the past been modified by man and is now being maintained for a variety of preservation and recreation purposes.

1956 RECREATION AND PARK YEARBOOK. Edited by George D. Butler and Muriel E. McGann. Published by National Recreation Association, 8 W. 8th St., N.Y.C. 1956. 130 pp., paper. $2.00.

This is a nation-wide inventory of the public recreation and park services of local, county, state, and federal agencies for 1955. The bulk of the publication is devoted to tables listing city and county park and recreation agencies, along with statistics as to the number and acreage of their parks, number of employees, expenditures, etc. Similar tables list state and federal agencies, with another major section devoted to state park statistics.

THE COMMUNITY OF THE FUTURE, by Arthur E. Morgan. Published by Community Service, Inc., Yellow Springs, Ohio. 1957. 166 pp. $3.00.

Can there be a community of the future which will save the vital elements from small community life of the past, which will capture those values of urban life that have universal appeal, and which will incorporate advances in technology and social understanding? What should be the characteristics of that community, and what can we do to bring them into being? These are the issues with which this book is concerned.

The author stresses the need for retaining wild land and open spaces about the community.

NEW BOOKS (cont.):

RECREATIONAL AREA MAP OF THE UNITED STATES with accompanying Key Guide. Size 29x47 in. Available from This Week Magazine, Box 239, Radio City Station, N. Y. C. 19. 1957. $1.00.

This is a revised and improved edition of a map formerly published by the National Park Service. Major national parks, monuments, forests, and wildlife refuges, and Indian reservations are delineated. Minor national areas are identified on the map by name. State parks and other areas are identified on the map by number referring to the key guide. Lack of delineation of major state areas on the map and brevity of information on state areas in the key guide are the most conspicuous shortcomings of this useful publication.

NORTH AMERICAN PRAIRIE, by J. E. Weaver. Johnsen Publishing Company, Lincoln, Nebraska. 1954. 348 pp.

GRASSLANDS OF THE GREAT PLAINS, THEIR NATURE AND USE, by J. E. Weaver and F. W. Albertson. Johnsen Publishing Company, Lincoln, Nebraska. 1956. 395 pp.

These companion volumes provide a well-illustrated presentation of material on the vegetation of the tall grass prairie and the plains regions, respectively. While a fair amount of detail is included, the books are non-technical enough to be readily understandable. The volumes describe the principal species and types of vegetation of the prairies and plains and discuss the dynamic aspects of the vegetation, particularly in relation to drought and grazing.

OUR DAILY POISON, the Effects of DDT, Fluorides, Hormones, and Other Chemicals on Modern Man, by Leonard Wickenden. Devin-Adair Company, 23 E. 26th Street, N. Y. C. 1956. 189 pp. $3.00

This well-documented book makes interesting reading on a profoundly important subject. Our moderr technology has succeeded in producing new pesticides and other substances and putting them into use in vast quantities before much, if anything, is known of their long-term effects. The author's concern is with the effect of increasing quantities of such chemicals in our food supply. The book draws to a considerable extent on the record of testimony before a committee of Congress.

With blanket spraying of millions of acres being currently carried on, the effect on wildlife of all kinds is also a matter of concern to conservationists.

Think Not of Man Alone

There is a food chain that builds a coon from a frog that fed on a butterfly that sucked juice from a flower. That chain does not cease with the coon. It may be complicated by a coyote or simplified by a worm. A coon may die in many ways. His destiny is not to be buried in a vault but to be reborn in leaf and flower and butterfly and frog and coon and coyote, and in millions of minute plants and animals.

But ever since the Jews sought solace in words and the Greeks began to reason, man has granted himself dominion over the earth. Aristotle preaches that nature 'made all animals for the sake of man.' Genesis proffers 'dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.'

What authority is there for such a concept other than our own self-interest and conceit? We are not the owners of life. We are part of it.

As I watch the eagles search the Mississippi I ponder their meaning—their bold harpooning of the shad, their bullying of the ducks, their upthrust head and thrilling cry. These have nothing to do with me. The eagle thrills to life as I do. These great birds were seeking shad long before our race stepped out of the darkness of time.

With the eagles are gulls, grebes, cormorants, mergansers and scaup, searching the river for their livelihood. What fiat empowers us to dictate their destiny? We can destroy all this—the complex social balance that exists among animals and plants—but could we invent a tree all over again, a vine, a hummingbird with a trumpet flower to fit? Can one of us design a tumblebug and teach him what to do, or fill the empty sky with geese and teach them V's, honking and where to fly?

Men cannot build life, for life is made with eons of time. To him that commands time, all things are possible. To him that does not, let him stand in awe of it.

History is so small. All we talk of as being important is one event. Its importance shrinks when we consider the millions of dim geological events that preceded us—the emergence of continents, the building of rivers and soils, the radiation, isolation and fusion of life. When we interpret our own story we must remember that compared to the cockroach we have barely been born. Turtles have been solving the problems of life 200,000,000 years longer than we have.

Dams, trains, revetments, cranes, towers, towns, highways of cars, smoke in the sky, motors on the river—these things are Man, and yet they are like chalk on a board. His books, his thoughts, his discoveries that seem so majestic, are no more majestic than the methods of the bee that exploits the flower. Animals and plants are creations as important as ourselves, though they are at our mercy, unfair as that may seem.

But man and his machines are in charge of our destiny and that of the planet. It is ourselves that we have been worshiping under the guise of God. Let us admit this deception and turn our admiration to time and life and chance, and find in them the proper inspiration for piety and awe. Worship and preach now lest Man, in desperation, resort to catastrophe, condemning the crazy elements to drift in abandon again.

--excerpt from a letter in the SATURDAY REVIEW, Oct. 6 1956, by Alfred G. Etter, as reprinted by the MISSOURI CONSERVATIONIST. Dr. Etter has just taken a position at Michigan State University, having formerly been at Washington University, St. Louis. He has served as chairman of the Missouri Chapter of Nature Conservancy.

The Nature Conservancy is an independent member-governed organization dedicated to saving America's heritage of wild nature. Its specific object is to preserve natural areas as "living museums" of the primeval wilderness. Such tracts are precious for their scientific, educational, and esthetic values. They also afford a home for the multitude of kinds of living things that would otherwise vanish from the earth, destroyed by our civilization.

The work of the organization began in 1917 under the direction of a committee of the Ecological Society of America. In 1946 the Ecologists Union was formed to take over these tasks. In 1950 its name was changed to the Nature Conservancy.

The members of the Nature Conservancy invite you to join in this work. Membership is open to both individuals and organizations. A contribution of $3 or more entitles you to annual membership, one of $100 or more to life membership and one of $1,000 or more to patron membership. Your contribution is an allowable income tax deduction.

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